

SCANDINAVIA -- 1977

Sybil Ory Morris
2354 Myrtle Avenue
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806

SCANDINAVIA -- 1977

Bergen, Norway has a character all its own. When Oslo was still a village Bergen was an important commercial and military center. This important Hanseatic League town was founded by Olav Kyrre in 1070.

Gigi met us in Bergen and we were bussed to Hotel Orion. It was a cold, rainy day but Clif and I borrowed an umbrella from the desk clerk and set off for a walk along the quay. Shops and fish and flower stalls were quainter than most; produce, fresher than most. We had piping hot bowls of oxtail soup and mugs of beer at a waterfront restaurant called Bryggestven. Next door is the well-preserved old Hanseatic Museum. It is an old wood building and it is furnished in 16th century style. An inside picture of merchant life in the Hansa days can be captured amidst the living and dining rooms, the office and store room. Bunks for the seamen merchants and old ledgers for accounts can be noticed.

After recovering from jet lag at Hotel Orion we walked around town again. We discovered the old Bryggen Tracteursted (restaurant) in a warren of old thrown-together wooden buildings. It had been an old cookhouse for wharf workers. When we asked if there would be salmon tonight the proprietor replied, "No, but if you get some, we will cook it." Off we went down to the quay. We bought fresh

salmon steaks and in a tiny store nearby we added prunes and "culture milk". We came to have one of the most unique, delightful evenings we've ever had. That night the whole restaurant was booked for the bankers' meeting and banquet. They granted us a special favor. If we promised to leave by 7:00, they would cook our salmon. By 5:30 we arrived. Viking helmets adorned the tables as centerpieces -- all was in readiness for the banking onslaught. We were favored guests! Never had we tasted such heavenly grilled salmon, boiled potatoes and cucumber salad. Our wine was white French burgundy and our waiters were charming. On the way home we dropped by the 800 year-old Mariachurch, Bergen's oldest, to hear a magnificent Bach concert.

Through Hardanger-fjord area we drove from Bergen. Our first stop was the home of Edward Grieg at Troldhangen. Here he and his wife Nina lived. His piano and photographs of Ole Bull and Bjornsen are in the parlor. On the river bank below the home is his studio-hut, a one-room building with only a piano, a couch, a desk, a rocking-chair, a rug and a stove -- necessary accoutrements for quiet composing. Afterward as we traveled along the Hardanger fjord, I seemed to hear "Peer Gynt". Even the brook was playing Grieg!

After stopping for mutton soup at Norbeimsund we drove on to Oppheim on Lake Upheimsvatn on the Voss-Gudvangen route. After settling in at our small "Hotel Oppheim" we walked in the quiet part of the evening . . . the scene was

bucolic and reminded me of Millet. A quaint white Lutheran church mingled with meadows and sheep and children. We watched an old couple throw water from a bucket . . . they resembled the couple in "The Virgin Spring".

Around the hotel that night there was much to do about "trolls", a subject of humorous tales. After dinner the "Toussaints" entertained the guests with a fiddler and a caricaturist. Early next morning once more we walked to see the green meadows and grazing sheep, the trees dressed for autumn in amber and red and gold, and to contemplate on the calm, mirror-like lake.

From Oppheim we drove through mountains and down a treacherous, narrow path to the ferry-line and down to Gudvangen to catch the ferry (our bus came along). For two hours and 100 miles we floated along, had lunch aboard, and gaped at 4000-6000 ft. high mountains on either side. The experience of riding on the Sognefjord was somewhere between being in a quiet chapel and a pulsating roller-coaster! We disembarked and went to Laerdal for a special treat. One finger of the Sogne Fjord comes to rest at Laerdal. Here we saw the unique, well-preserved Borgund Stave Church. It is made of hewn timber and is roofed and sided with long, round-tipped shingles. The old medieval wooden-stove church is from about 1150. It was originally a Catholic church and became Lutheran along the way. Clif and I were astonished to recognize how much it looks like

the old wooden church at Suzdal near Moscow.

Images of Oppheim and Tyin are as disparate as the imagination allows. On one hand there are Oppenheim's mountains with vegetation and green, red and orange meadows, sheep and a mirror-calm lake; on the other there are snow-capped mountains, icy cold land and wavy waters of Tyin. These mountains are in the Jotunheim range. It was bitterly cold when we arrived at Tyin and the "Hoyfjellshotell". Our rooms were cold so we huddled around the lobby fireplace with the others to wait for supper.

The view from our hotel window was majestic -- the Fillefjell mountains on a lake with white-capped, turbulent waves. The scenery contrast between Tyin and Oppenheim is unbelievable. The water lapped murmuringly against our window all night playing Grieg, of course! Snow and icicles decorated the hotels while carpenters, unmindful of the weather, hurried to complete the hotel's pool and family room.

Tuesday afternoon we arrived in Oslo and settled in at Hotel Scandinavia. To Tre Kokker (3 cooks) for an elegant, expensive dinner -- grilled salmon and a special sauce, potatoes and salad; for dessert, ice cream wrapped in fine nuts with caramel cream. In Oslo it was 30° below zero and the cold interfered with our sight-seeing. We dashed off to Vigeland Park (Frogner) to see sculptures, Viking ships, Fram, Kon-Tiki, Resistance (WW II) Museum (Bygdoy Peninsula) and other highlights completed the tour.

We had late lunch at old artists' haunt, Blom's. Great lunch: trout filet with crayfish (or shrimp), rice. Blackberries and pistachio ice cream with blackberry sauce (flamed) for dessert. We had dinner that evening in the hotel restaurant.

We reached Stockholm and the Hotel Amaranten. Sweden's capital was founded as a fortress on a little stone island where Lake Malar reaches the Baltic. This beautiful city has been called the "Venice of the North". Our first evening in Stockholm was memorable. We heard the renowned pianist Robert Reiffling play a concert at the Royal Opera House just across the bridge from the Royal Palace. Supper afterward at the Operakallaren in the Opera House was a memorable dining experience.

On October 7 we left Stockholm for Uppsala on the 11:00 train. This cold, rainy day we stopped along the way at Marsta and Knivsta. At Uppsala we walked from the station to the old cathedral (400' high steeple) where the remains of St. Eric are contained in a gold casket. Also, there are tombs of Gustava I and two wives. We visited the museum which houses old vestments and the 600 year-old red dress of Queen Margaretha, union queen. Then we walked to the University area, a charming campus. At the Carolina Viddeva we saw a Codex Argenteum (Silver Bible) written on purple vellum in gold and silver with 181 pages remaining from 300 or so. It is the earliest Gothic specimen. We

also saw documents from Karl Marx, Adam Smith, Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Edison, Lincoln, and an original music manuscript of Mozart. We saw papers from Vesalius regarding medicine. At noon we lunched at Hotel Gillet cafeteria. We were back in the evening in Stockholm and had dinner with Naomi Cline and Jonas Sundberg at Cattelin's in old town.

On Saturday, October 9, we arrived in Helsinki and stayed at Hesperia Hotel. We attended Mass at St. Henry's at 7:00. This cold night we took a taxi to Bellevue (near Orthodox Church) for a fascinating meal: salmon hors d'oeuvres, reindeer-stuffed ravioli and a salmon entrée. On Sunday we walked to Lektovaara (Humalistonkada 19) for dinner. Elegant! Our last evening there was a concert at the hotel -- renaissance chamber music, flute and guitar. Before we left Helsinki I had time for my first sauna and real Finnish massage -- while visions of Scandinavia solidified in my memory.